



Two sections of Whirlwinds put up a formation show reminiscent of R.A.F. displays at Hendon in pre-war days.

## Fighters and Fighter-bombers

*Two Visits to Air Stations : Protection and Intruding*

By MAJOR

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**I**N the happy days of peace No. 609 (West Riding) Squadron belonged to the Auxiliary Air Force. Some people now do not know or remember what the Auxiliary Air Force was. It may be worth while stating that it stood to the Royal Air Force in exactly the same relation in which the

Territorial Army stood to the Regular Army. It was different from the R.A.F. Reserve and the R.A.F.V.R. in that it was organised in separate and complete squadrons, each bearing the name of its locality. But in 1939 the A.A.F. differed from the T.A. in that the latter had won battle

honours, whereas the former had come into existence since the last war. *Flight* always admired the efficiency of the A.A.F. squadrons, having visited a number of them, and had felt sure that they would do well in war. *Flight* was quite right; they have.

In time of peace most of the officers and airmen of No. 609 Squadron came from round about Leeds and Bradford. There are still some of the Yorkshire airmen in the squadron, but the pilots now represent the Empire and the United Nations. In time of war it is not possible to preserve the peculiar character of an A.A.F. squadron; it inevitably becomes merged in the general muster roll of the R.A.F. Still, however, an officer who is able to wear a gilt A on the lapels of his tunic instead of V.R. is proud of it. It shows that he had undertaken fighting responsibilities before the war broke out. It is also certain that both regular and V.R. officers are proud when they are posted to an A.A.F. squadron, for these squadrons have won high reputations. No. 609 Squadron has shot down more than 170 enemy aircraft, and means to reach its second century before very long.



Fitting a 250-lb. general purpose bomb to the port wing of a Westland Whirlibomber.